

Amendments to the Claims

Kindly amend claims 1, 24, 34, 36-38, 40-43, 45-69 & 92 as set forth below. In accordance with current amendment practice, all pending claims are reproduced below. The changes in the amended claims are shown by underlining (for added matter) and strikethrough/double brackets (for deleted matter).

1. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method of facilitating the exchange of commodities, said method comprising:

utilizing by a buyer entity and a seller entity ~~[[a]]~~ an automated public business trading hub in the public exchange of one or more commodities, wherein the buyer entity, the seller entity and the public business trading hub are each separate and independently owned; and

performing via an automated trusted agent one or more private business functions associated with the public exchange of the one or more commodities between the buyer entity and the seller entity using the public business trading hub, wherein the one or more private business functions include managing in private at least one of:

(i) one or more pricing terms associated with the public exchange;

(ii) one or more contract terms associated with the public exchange;

~~(iii) —one or more strategic relationships associated with the public exchange;~~

~~(iii)~~ ~~[[iv]]~~ one or more business terms ~~processes~~ associated with supply and demand of commodities associated with the public exchange; and

(iv) ~~[(v)]~~ one or more product schedules associated with the public exchange, and

wherein the automated trusted agent is electronically coupled to the public business trading hub and is separate from the buyer entity, the seller entity and the public business trading hub, and wherein details of the one or more private business functions performed by the automated trusted agent remain unknown to other entities accessing the public business trading hub.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the managing of one or more pricing terms includes masking at least one pricing term of the one or more pricing terms to shield the at least one pricing term from one or more entities of the plurality of entities.

4. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the one or more entities include one or more contract manufacturers.

5. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the one or more entities include one or more suppliers.

6. (Canceled)

7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the performing enables protection of one or more contract terms associated with the exchange from one or more entities of the plurality of entities.

8. (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein the protection includes shielding price from one or more entities of the plurality of entities.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein at least one entity of said plurality of entities includes at least one contract manufacturer, and wherein the performing enables controlling allocation of commodities across the at least one contract manufacturer.

10. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein multiple entities of said plurality of entities include multiple suppliers, and wherein the performing enables dividing an order for a plurality of commodities of the exchange among the multiple suppliers.

11. (Canceled)

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the automated trusted agent includes one or more tools utilized in performing the one or more selected business functions.

13. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein the one or more tools include at least one of a purchase order/supply order engine, linked pricing tables, and one or more supply/demand aggregation tools.

14. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the automated trusted agent is coupled to the public business trading hub.

15. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the automated trusted agent is a part of the public business trading hub.

16. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the exchange is based on a buy/sell model.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein one entity of the plurality of entities is an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM), and wherein said utilizing the public business trading hub comprises utilizing the public business trading hub by the OEM to obtain a product having at least a portion of the one or more commodities.

18. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein the automated trusted agent enables the OEM to retain control of one or more facets of the exchange.

19. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein the automated trusted agent enables the OEM to retain control of at least one of sensitive information, one or more business processes, and one or more relationships associated with the exchange.

20. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said utilizing the public business trading hub comprises utilizing the public business trading hub in a networked environment.

21. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of entities comprises one or more contract manufacturers and one or more suppliers.

22. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21, wherein the performing one or more selected business functions associated with the exchange of the one or more commodities via the automated trusted agent comprises:

placing an order for the one or more commodities with at least one supplier of the one or more suppliers, the order representing a request from at least one contract manufacturer of the one or more contract manufacturers;

handling one or more invoices received from the at least one supplier; and

invoicing the at least one contract manufacturer requesting the one or more commodities.

23. (Original) The method of claim 22, wherein the plurality of entities further comprises an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) requesting one or more products from the one or more contract manufacturers, and wherein the performing further comprises forwarding to the OEM a price differential, if any, resulting from a difference in the one or more invoices received from the at least one supplier and the invoicing of the at least one contract manufacturer.

24. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method of facilitating the exchange of commodities, said method comprising:

requesting by a first entity of a plurality of entities associated with [[a]] an automated public business trading hub to obtain one or more commodities of a product, said one or more commodities to be obtained from one or more second entities of the plurality of entities via a public exchange using the public business

trading hub which is separate and independently owned from the plurality of entities;

using an automated trusted agent to interface between said first entity and said one or more second entities, wherein one or more aspects associated with the public exchange of said one or more commodities are controlled in private by said automated trusted agent, and wherein the automated trusted agent comprises one entity of the plurality of entities, and wherein the one or more aspects controlled in private by the automated trusted agent include at least one of:

one or more pricing terms associated with the public exchange of said one or more commodities;

one or more contract terms associated with the public exchange of said one or more commodities;

~~one or more strategic relationships associated with the public exchange of said one or more commodities;~~

one or more business terms ~~processes~~ associated with supply and demand of commodities associated with the public exchange of said one or more commodities;

one or more product schedules associated with the public exchange of said one or more commodities; and

wherein the automated trusted agent is separate and independently owned from the first entity, the one or more entities, and the public business trading hub, and wherein details of the one or more aspects of the public exchange controlled in private by the automated trusted agent remain unknown to other entities of the plurality of entities associated with the public business trading hub.

25. (Original) The method of claim 24, wherein the one or more aspects include invoicing associated with the one or more commodities.

26. (Original) The method of claim 24, wherein the first entity is a contract manufacturer and the one or more second entities are one or more suppliers.
27. (Original) The method of claim 24, further comprising placing an order for the product at said first entity, by a third entity.
28. (Original) The method of claim 27, wherein said third entity is an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM), and wherein the automated trusted agent protects for the OEM one or more facets associated with the order.
29. (Original) The method of claim 28, wherein the one or more facets include one or more contract terms.
30. (Original) The method of claim 29, wherein the one or more contract terms include one or more price terms.
31. (Original) The method of claim 28, wherein the one or more facets include at least one of sensitive information, one or more business processes, and one or more relationships associated with obtaining the one or more commodities.
32. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 24, wherein the automated trusted agent is a part of the public business trading hub.
33. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 24, wherein the automated trusted agent is coupled to the public business trading hub.
34. (Currently Amended) ~~A system of~~ An apparatus for facilitating the exchange of commodities, said ~~system~~ apparatus comprising:
- means for utilizing by a buyer entity and a seller entity a public business trading hub in the public exchange of one or more commodities, wherein the buyer entity, the seller entity and the public business trading hub are each separate and independently owned; and

means for performing via an automated trusted agent one or more private business functions associated with the public exchange of the one or more commodities between the buyer entity and the seller entity using the public business trading hub, wherein the one or more private business functions include managing in private at least one of:

(i) one or more pricing terms associated with the public exchange;

(ii) one or more contract terms associated with the public exchange;

~~(iii) —one or more strategic relationships associated with the public exchange;~~

~~(iii)~~ ~~[[iv]]~~ one or more business terms ~~processes~~ associated with supply and demand of commodities associated with the public exchange; and

~~(iv)~~ ~~[[v]]~~ one or more product schedules associated with the public exchange, and

wherein the automated trusted agent is electronically coupled to the public business trading hub and is separate from the buyer entity, the seller entity and the public business trading hub, and wherein details of the one or more private business functions performed by the automated trusted agent remain unknown to other entities accessing the public business trading hub.

35. (Canceled)

36. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 34, wherein the managing of one or more pricing terms includes masking at least one pricing term of the one or more pricing terms to shield the at least one pricing term from one or more entities of the plurality of entities.

37. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 36, wherein the one or more entities include one or more contract manufacturers.

38. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 36, wherein the one or more entities include one or more suppliers.

39. (Canceled)

40. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 34, wherein the means for performing enables protection of one or more contract terms associated with the exchange from one or more entities of the plurality of entities.

41. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 40, wherein the protection includes shielding price from one or more entities of the plurality of entities.

42. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 34, wherein at least one entity of said plurality of entities includes at least one contract manufacturer, and wherein the means for performing enables controlling allocation of commodities across the at least one contract manufacturer.

43. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 34, wherein multiple entities of said plurality of entities include multiple suppliers, and wherein the means for performing enables dividing an order for a plurality of commodities of the exchange among the multiple suppliers.

44. (Canceled)

45. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 34, wherein the automated trusted agent includes one or more tools utilized in performing the one or more selected business functions.

46. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 45, wherein the one or more tools include at least one of a purchase order/supply order engine, linked pricing tables, and one or more supply/demand aggregation tools.

47. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 34, wherein the automated trusted agent is coupled to the public business trading hub.

48. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 34, wherein the automated trusted agent is a part of the public business trading hub.

49. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 34, wherein the exchange is based on a buy/sell model.

50. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 34, wherein one entity of the plurality of entities is an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM), and wherein said means for utilizing the public business trading hub comprises means for utilizing the public business trading hub by the OEM to obtain a product having at least a portion of the one or more commodities.

51. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 50, wherein the automated trusted agent enables the OEM to retain control of one or more facets of the exchange.

52. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 51, wherein the automated trusted agent enables the OEM to retain control of at least one of sensitive information, one or more business processes, and one or more relationships associated with the exchange.

53. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 34, wherein said means for utilizing the public business trading hub comprises means for utilizing the public business trading hub in a networked environment.

54. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 34, wherein the plurality of entities comprises one or more contract manufacturers and one or more suppliers.

55. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 54, wherein the means for performing one or more selected business trading functions associated with the exchange of the one or more commodities via the automated trusted agent comprises:

means for placing an order for the one or more commodities with at least one supplier of the one or more suppliers, the order representing a request from at least one contract manufacturer of the one or more contract manufacturers;

means for handling one or more invoices received from the at least one supplier; and

means for invoicing the at least one contract manufacturer requesting the one or more commodities.

56. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 55, wherein the plurality of entities further comprises an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) requesting one or more products from the one or more contract manufacturers, and wherein the means for performing further comprises means for forwarding to the OEM a price differential, if any, resulting from a difference in the one or more invoices received from the at least one supplier and the invoicing of the at least one contract manufacturer.

57. (Currently Amended) ~~A system of~~ An apparatus for facilitating the exchange of commodities, said system comprising:

a first entity of a plurality of entities associated with a public business trading hub to obtain one or more commodities of a product, said one or more commodities to be obtained from one or more second entities of the plurality of entities via a public exchange using the public business trading hub which is separate and independently owned from the plurality of entities; and

an automated trusted agent to interface between said first entity and said one or more second entities, wherein one or more aspects associated with the public exchange of said one or more commodities are controlled in private by said automated trusted agent and wherein the automated trusted agent comprises one entity of the plurality of entities, and

wherein the one or more aspects controlled in private by the automated trusted agent include at least one of:

one or more pricing terms associated with the public exchange of said one or more commodities;

one or more contract terms associated with the public exchange of said one or more commodities;

~~one or more strategic relationships associated with the public exchange of said one or more commodities;~~

one or more business terms ~~processes~~ associated with supply and demand of commodities associated with the public exchange of said one or more commodities; and

one or more product schedules associated with the public exchange of said one or more commodities; and

wherein the automated trusted agent is separate and independently owned from the first entity, the one or more entities, and the public business trading hub, and wherein details of the one or more aspects of the public exchange controlled in private by the automated trusted agent remain unknown to other entities of the plurality of entities associated with the public business trading hub.

58. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 57, wherein the one or more aspects include means for invoicing associated with the one or more commodities.

59. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 57, wherein the first entity is a contract manufacturer and the one or more second entities are one or more suppliers.

60. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 57, further comprising a third entity to place an order for the product at said first entity.

61. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 60, wherein said third entity is an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM), and wherein the automated trusted agent protects for the OEM one or more facets associated with the order.

62. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 61, wherein the one or more facets include one or more contract terms.

63. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 62, wherein the one or more contract terms include one or more price terms.

64. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 61, wherein the one or more facets include at least one of sensitive information, one or more business processes, and one or more relationships associated with obtaining the one or more commodities.

65. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 57, wherein the automated trusted agent is a part of the public business trading hub.

66. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 57, wherein the automated trusted agent is coupled to the public business trading hub.

67. (Currently Amended) ~~A system of~~ An apparatus for facilitating the exchange of commodities, said system comprising:

a public business trading hub used by a buyer entity and a seller entity in the public exchange of one or more commodities, wherein the buyer entity, the seller entity and the public business trading hub are each separate and independently owned; and

an automated trusted agent to perform one or more private business functions associated with the public exchange of the one or more commodities between the buyer entity and the seller entity using the public business trading hub, wherein the one or more private business functions include managing in private at least one of:

(i) one or more pricing terms associated with the public exchange;

(ii) one or more contract terms associated with the public exchange;

~~(iii) — one or more strategic relationships associated with the public exchange;~~

~~(iii) [(iv)]~~ one or more business terms ~~processes~~ associated with supply and demand of commodities associated with the public exchange;

~~(iv) [(v)]~~ one or more product schedules associated with the public exchange, and

wherein the automated trusted agent is electronically coupled to the public business trading hub and is separate from the buyer entity, the seller entity and the public business trading hub, and wherein details of the one or more private business functions performed by the automated trusted agent remain unknown to other entities accessing the public business trading hub.

68. (Currently Amended) ~~A system of~~ An apparatus for facilitating the exchange of commodities, said system comprising:

means for requesting by a first entity of a plurality of entities associated with a public business trading hub to obtain one or more commodities of a product, said one or more commodities to be obtained from one or more second entities of the plurality of entities via a public exchange using the public business trading hub, which is separate and independently owned from the plurality of entities; and

means for using an automated trusted agent to interface between said first entity and said one or more second entities, wherein one or more aspects associated with the public exchange of said one or more commodities are controlled in private by said automated trusted agent and wherein the automated trusted agent comprises one entity of the plurality of entities; and

wherein the one or more aspects controlled in private by the automated trusted agent include at least one of:

one or more pricing terms associated with the public exchange of said one or more commodities;

one or more contract terms associated with the public exchange of said one or more commodities;

~~one or more strategic relationships associated with the public exchange of said one or more commodities;~~

one or more business terms ~~processes~~ associated with supply and demand of commodities associated with the public exchange of said one or more commodities;

one or more product schedules associated with the public exchange of said one or more commodities; and

wherein the automated trusted agent is separate and independently owned from the first entity, the one or more entities, and the public business trading hub, and wherein details of the one or more aspects of the public exchange controlled in private by the automated trusted agent remain unknown to other entities of the plurality of entities associated with the public business trading hub.

69. (Currently Amended) At least one program storage device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying at least one program of instructions executable by the machine to perform a method of facilitating the exchange of commodities, said method comprising:

utilizing by a buyer entity and a seller entity a public business trading hub in the public exchange of one or more commodities, wherein the buyer entity, the seller entity and the public business trading hub are each separate and independently owned; and

performing via an automated trusted agent one or more private business functions associated with the public exchange of the one or more commodities between the buyer entity and the seller entity using the public business trading hub, wherein the one or more private business functions include managing in private at least one of:

(i) one or more pricing terms associated with the public exchange;

(ii) one or more contract terms associated with public exchange;

~~(iii) one or more strategic partnerships associated with supply and demand of commodities associated with the public exchange;~~

~~(iii) [(iv)]~~ one or more business terms ~~processes~~ associated with supply and demand of commodities associated with the public exchange; and

~~(iv) [(v)]~~ one or more product schedules associated with the public exchange, and

wherein the automated trusted agent is electronically coupled to the public business trading hub and is separate from the buyer entity, the seller entity and the public business trading hub, and wherein details of the one or more private business functions performed by the automated trusted agent remain unknown to other entities accessing the public business trading hub.

70. (Canceled)

71. (Previously Presented) The at least one program storage device of claim 69, wherein the managing of one or more pricing terms includes masking at least one pricing term of the one or more pricing terms to shield the at least one pricing term from one or more entities of the plurality of entities.

72. (Original) The at least one program storage device of claim 71, wherein the one or more entities include one or more contract manufacturers.

73. (Original) The at least one program storage device of claim 71, wherein the one or more entities include one or more suppliers.

74. (Canceled)

75. (Original) The at least one program storage device of claim 69, wherein the performing enables protection of one or more contract terms associated with the exchange from one or more entities of the plurality of entities.

76. (Original) The at least one program storage device of claim 75, wherein the protection includes shielding price from one or more entities of the plurality of entities.

77. (Original) The at least one program storage device of claim 69, wherein at least one entity of said plurality of entities includes at least one contract manufacturer, and wherein the performing enables controlling allocation of commodities across the at least one contract manufacturer.

78. (Original) The at least one program storage device of claim 69, wherein multiple entities of said plurality of entities include multiple suppliers, and wherein the performing enables dividing an order for a plurality of commodities of the exchange among the multiple suppliers.

79. (Canceled)

80. (Previously Presented) The at least one program storage device of claim 69, wherein the automated trusted agent includes one or more tools utilized in performing the one or more selected business functions.

81. (Original) The at least one program storage device of claim 80, wherein the one or more tools include at least one of a purchase order/supply order engine, linked pricing tables, and one or more supply/demand aggregation tools.

82. (Previously Presented) The at least one program storage device of claim 69, wherein the automated trusted agent is coupled to the public business trading hub.

83. (Previously Presented) The at least one program storage device of claim 69, wherein the automated trusted agent is a part of the public business trading hub.

84. (Original) The at least one program storage device of claim 69, wherein the exchange is based on a buy/sell model.

85. (Previously Presented) The at least one program storage device of claim 69, wherein one entity of the plurality of entities is an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM), and wherein said utilizing the public business trading hub comprises utilizing the public business trading hub by the OEM to obtain a product having at least a portion of the one or more commodities.

86. (Original) The at least one program storage device of claim 85, wherein the automated trusted agent enables the OEM to retain control of one or more facets of the exchange.

87. (Original) The at least one program storage device of claim 86, wherein the automated trusted agent enables the OEM to retain control of at least one of sensitive information, one or more business processes, and one or more relationships associated with the exchange.

88. (Previously Presented) The at least one program storage device of claim 69, wherein said utilizing the public business trading hub comprises utilizing the public business trading hub in a networked environment.

89. (Original) The at least one program storage device of claim 69, wherein the plurality of entities comprises one or more contract manufacturers and one or more suppliers.

90. (Previously Presented) The at least one program storage device of claim 89, wherein the performing one or more selected business functions associated with the exchange of the one or more commodities via the automated trusted agent comprises:

placing an order for the one or more commodities with at least one supplier of the one or more suppliers, the order representing a request from at least one contract manufacturer of the one or more contract manufacturers;

handling one or more invoices received from the at least one supplier; and

invoicing the at least one contract manufacturer requesting the one or more commodities.

91. (Original) The at least one program storage device of claim 90, wherein the plurality of entities further comprises an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) requesting one or more products from the one or more contract manufacturers, and wherein the performing further comprises forwarding to the OEM a price differential, if any, resulting from a difference in the one or more invoices received from the at least one supplier and the invoicing of the at least one contract manufacturer.

92. (Currently Amended) At least one program storage device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying at least one program of instructions executable by the machine to perform a method of facilitating the exchange of commodities, said method comprising:

requesting by a first entity of a plurality of entities associated with a public business trading hub to obtain one or more commodities of a product, said one or more commodities to be obtained from one or more second entities of the plurality of entities via a public exchange using the public business trading hub, which is separate and independently owned from the plurality of entities;

using an automated trusted agent to interface between said first entity and said one or more second entities, wherein one or more aspects associated with the public exchange of said one or more commodities are controlled in private by said automated trusted agent and wherein the automated trusted agent comprises one entity of the plurality of entities, and

wherein the one or more aspects controlled in private by the automated trusted agent include at least one of:

one or more pricing terms associated with the public exchange of said one or more commodities;

one or more contract terms associated with the public exchange of said one or more commodities;

~~one or more strategic relationships associated with the public exchange of said one or more commodities;~~

one or more business terms ~~processes~~ associated with supply and demand of commodities associated with the public exchange of said one or more commodities; and

one or more product schedules associated with the public exchange of said one or more commodities; and

wherein the automated trusted agent is separate and independently owned from the first entity, the one or more entities, and the public business trading hub, and wherein details of the one or more aspects of the public exchange controlled in private by the automated trusted agent remain unknown to other entities of the plurality of entities associated with the public business trading hub.

93. (Original) The at least one program storage device of claim 92, wherein the one or more aspects include invoicing associated with the one or more commodities.

94. (Original) The at least one program storage device of claim 92, wherein the first entity is a contract manufacturer and the one or more second entities are one or more suppliers.

95. (Original) The at least one program storage device of claim 92, wherein said method further comprises placing an order for the product at said first entity, by a third entity.

96. (Original) The at least one program storage device of claim 95, wherein said third entity is an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM), and wherein the automated trusted agent protects for the OEM one or more facets associated with the order.

97. (Original) The at least one program storage device of claim 96, wherein the one or more facets include one or more contract terms.

98. (Original) The at least one program storage device of claim 97, wherein the one or more contract terms include one or more price terms.

99. (Original) The at least one program storage device of claim 96, wherein the one or more facets include at least one of sensitive information, one or more business processes, and one or more relationships associated with obtaining the one or more commodities.

100. (Previously Presented) The at least one program storage device of claim 92, wherein the automated trusted agent is a part of the public business trading hub.

101. (Previously Presented) The at least one program storage device of claim 92, wherein the automated trusted agent is coupled to the public business trading hub.

102. (Canceled)

* * * * *